

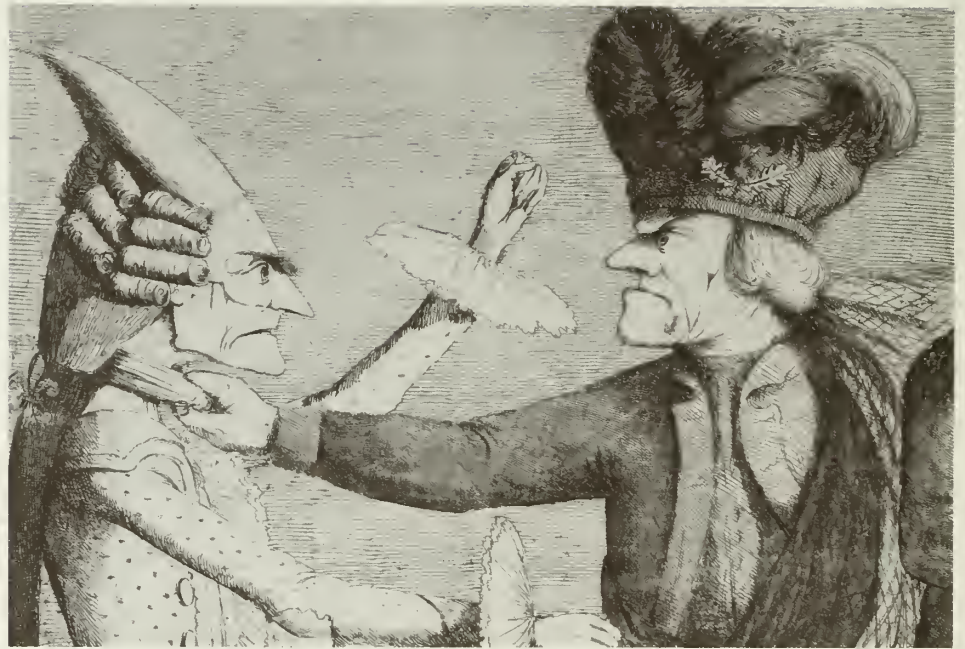
THIRD-PARTY POLITICS

BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND AMERICA IN AN AGE OF REVOLUTION
BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART, APRIL 9 – JULY 12, 2009



COVER ILLUSTRATION:
James Gillray, English, 1757–1815
*Britania's Assassination,
or the Republicans Amusement, 1782*
engraving
Gift of Miss Susan Dwight Bliss
1956.24.309

BELOW:
J. Phillips, English, eighteenth century
The Present State of Great Britain
(detail of engraving; see page 7)



FOREWORD

IN PLANNING THIS PUBLICATION, we have chosen to meander down paths that sometimes stray far from the prints on view in the exhibition, touching upon English radicalism and print journalism, the response to the French Revolution by the propertied classes of England, and attempts by Crown and Parliament to police and control what could be said in print and what images could be published. We hope our reflections offer some context within which to “read” these remnants of visual and material culture.

For eighteenth-century monarchs restlessly watching as radical journalists churned out seditious texts, the stream of paper off the presses might have produced sweat under the collar (especially at the thought of poor Louis in France). It is a stretch, but does the guillotine not look a lot like a printing press? Replace a blade with a plate and a neck with a sheet of paper. The printer John Wilkes, champion of the free press, said of William Hogarth’s skill at caricature that he could “gibbet in colour” like no one else. Within the next sixty years, the practice of gibbeting, the public display of dead, dying, or tortured bodies, would be almost completely retired by the British government as a form of punishment. Its purpose in the first place was to broadcast the power of the king to potentially unruly subjects; in a macabre way it was live media in a way that print could never be. In an era when mass politics would rely on printed charters and manifestos and the state would require sophisticated techniques for surveillance, censorship, and its own propaganda, such physical displays of torture were inefficient and unpredictable. It is fitting, then, that one of the last victims of the pillory in England was a printer, Daniel Isaac Eaton. The crowd at Newgate, 15,000 strong, cheered for him.

A caveat on the power of the printed word and image should be mentioned at the outset, and that is that modern historians have no choice but to contend with it in spite of its limitations. Print could freeze for posterity the stories and the viewpoints of printmakers and those with wealth enough to hire them. For all their biting political satire and their artistry, William Hogarth and James Gillray were mercilessly condescending in their depictions of the English poor and the working classes. Prints of the period that traded in symbols of republican liberty and political slavery rarely depicted the real human bondage that would have been the condition of hundreds of thousands in the British West Indies alone in any given year represented in this collection. Several of the prints on view in this exhibition situate their allegory in the waters of the Atlantic. We see the Dutchman with his barrels of exotic colonial commodities and caricatured Frenchmen and Spaniards bent on thwarting English commercial interests. But none of these represents real, existing slavery—that mainspring of trans-Atlantic trade that made nations rich. We hope that you will consider such suppressed narratives as much as the narratives in evidence here.

Katherine Finnegan
Diana Tuite
Aaron Windel

FIGURE 1:
William Hogarth, English, 1697-1764
John Wilkes Esq.
engraving
Loan from Albert E. Stone, Jr.
74.1991.a



John Wilkes Esq.^r
Drawn from the life and etched in Aquafortis by W^m Hogarth.
Price 1 Shilling. *Published according to the Act of Parliament May 4 1763.*

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BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND AMERICA IN AN AGE OF REVOLUTION

THE PRINTS IN THIS EXHIBITION were created during the early decades of the sixty-year rule of George III as King of Great Britain and King of Ireland. George III came to the throne in 1760, in the midst of the highly unpopular Seven Years' War (1756–1763), which was being fought in continental Europe and America. The Age of Revolution was gathering force in America and France, and Britain would continue to be involved in overseas conflicts. At home, artists, printmakers, and writers used the expanding power of print to add their voices to the political scene.

“THE CONSTANT COUPLE”: GEORGE III AND THE “MIDDLING RANKS”

From the 1760s on, many Britons rallied behind King George III during the Seven Years' War and in his dealings with the rebellious settlers in the North American colonies. Although he was a symbol of tyranny for the colonists, at home George was viewed by many as a respected guardian, and he and Queen Charlotte were referred to as the “Constant Couple.”¹ Prints such as *Children of George III* served to acquaint the public with the royal family and to emphasize the king and queen's successful childrearing.

Beyond this, George actively cultivated a simple, domestic persona, an act of self-fashioning that historian Linda Colley sees as having shored up national security in the moment. She writes that George III “now seemed to many to represent a reassuring stability in the midst of national flux and humiliation, honest uncomplicated worth in contrast with those meretricious, complex and/or immoral politicians who had failed.”² Consistent with this interpretation, Benjamin Smith's engraving *Portrait of His Most Gracious Majesty King George the Third* portrays a regal king at the same time that it underscores his penchant for animal husbandry.

1. Tamara L. Hunt, “Morality and Monarchy in the Queen Caroline Affair,” *ALBION: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 23 (1991), 718.

2. Linda Colley, “The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760–1820,” *Past and Present* 102 (1984), 104.

REPRESSIVE PRINT CULTURE

Beyond contending with the external ideological threat of republicanism, King George endured internal attacks generated by members of the press. Perhaps the most radical of these was John Wilkes, a London journalist and publisher of *The North Briton*, an anti-government paper in dialogue with the Tory publication, *The Briton*. Number XLV of *The North Briton* contained Wilkes's most infamous indictment of the king and ultimately led to his arrest.

In this volume, Wilkes criticized George's presentation to Parliament regarding the Treaty of Paris at the end of the Seven Years' War. Although Prussia had emerged the most victorious power through its acquisition of new lands, George's speech declared the war a victory for Great Britain. Wilkes immediately condemned the speech by blaming the Earl of Bute, who was the prime minister and King George's court favorite, for voicing his opinions through the sovereign. In doing this, Wilkes perpetrated an obvious and direct assault on the Crown and was arrested and brought to trial for seditious libel.

During Wilkes's trial in Westminster Hall, British engraver and satirist William Hogarth produced an engraving (FIG. 1, page 4) in which a devilish and cross-eyed Wilkes sits holding a liberty pole and cap inscribed with the word "Liberty." This cap had a long iconographic history descending from two sometimes intersecting, symbolic practices in the ancient world. In Rome, the *pileus* was a cap used in the manumission ceremonies of soon-to-be-freed slaves. For Greeks, the red Phrygian cap denoted foreigners from the East and was particularly associated with the cult of Mithras.³ By the eighteenth century, the cap and pole had returned as classical symbols for independence.

With this engraving, Hogarth, also a favorite of the prime minister, was retaliating for having been the victim of a blistering critique by Wilkes in Number XVII of *The North Briton*.

"Hogarth made the attempt, but the rancour and malevolence of his mind made him very soon turn with envy and disgust from objects of so pleasing contemplation, to dwell and feast a bad heart on others of a hateful cast, which he pursued, for he found them congenial, with the most un-abating zeal, and unrelenting gall."⁴

In spite of Hogarth's parody, Wilkes's arrest prompted a massive outcry and he became a galvanizing symbol for freedom of the press.

Wilkes had previously attacked Bute in Number V of *The North Briton* by likening him to Roger Mortimer. Roger Mortimer had been the Earl of March under King Edward II (1307–1327), husband of Queen Isabella of France. Mortimer and Queen Isabella were lovers who escaped to France, where they successfully conspired to invade England, depose Edward II, and replace him with his son, Edward III. Wilkes continued to draw parallels between Bute and Mortimer in the dedication to the reissued play, *The Fall of Mortimer*: "wherever the name of Roger Mortimer shall be mentioned, that of Bute will follow to the latest times."⁵

3. Yvonne Korshak, "The Liberty Cap as a Revolutionary Symbol in America and France," *Swithsonian Studies in American Art*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Autumn, 1987), 53–69.

4. John Wilkes and Charles Churchill, "Number XVII," *The North Briton* 1 (1762), 89.

5. William Mountfort, *The Fall of Mortimer* (London: G. Kearsly, 1763).

FIGURE 2:
J. Phillips, English, eighteenth century
The Present State of Great Britain
engraving
Gift of Miss Susan Dwight Bliss
1956.24.344



FIGURE 3:
Anonymous
The Reconciliation between Britania
and her daughter America, 1782
etching
Gift of Miss Susan Dwight Bliss
1963.454



She RECONCILIATION between BRITANIA and her daughter *AMERICA*,

¹
A curse upon all Artifice
My Britons never thrive

²
While Roguish Mins-try they keep
to Eat them up alive

³
By Lots they sh^d Dam em well
Each place we put our trust in

⁴
Cut them off short it will mak good use
Which we can't do now

“THE HORSE AMERICA, THROWING HIS MASTER”

(Title of a 1779 print published by William White)

In John Wilkes the American colonists thought they had found a sympathetic advocate who embodied the ideological ambitions of the American Patriot Party. Among the more radical factions of the American Patriot Party was The Sons of Liberty, a covert organization of patriots who rebelled by attacking colonial officials and destroying Crown property. The Sons of Liberty contacted Wilkes in 1768, appealing to their shared “generous and inflexible principles,” and they kept up correspondence with him as events unfolded in the colonies.⁶ Wilkes was a passionate supporter of the American colonists’ struggle for independence and was angered by the violent and despotic measures taken by the Crown. However, Wilkes served primarily a symbolic function for the overseas population, since he was shut out of Parliament until 1774, at which point relations between the British state and disgruntled colonists were beyond repair.

By threatening to form their own nation, the American colonists not only defied King George III, but touched off a broader European power struggle. France and, by alliance, Spain and Holland had aligned themselves with the colonists by 1779. Prints such as *The Present State of Great Britain* (FIG. 2, page 7) highlight Britain’s perceived vulnerability. Allegorized as a hapless sentry dozing on his watch, England is defended from the menacing gestures of the French by a Scot who safeguards his liberty pole even as the Dutch pick his pockets and America absconds with his liberty cap.

Prints from this period frequently allegorized America as the “savage” *female* counter to Britannia, a symbol of the state since the Roman era (FIG. 3, page 8). Here America is characterized as the scantily clad and, by implication, licentious daughter of a chaste and classical mother.

After the war, Loyalists who remained supporters of the Crown either chose to emigrate or else were forced to turn their property over to patriots. *The Savages let loose* (FIG. 4, page 10) draws an uneasy analogy between the American patriots and the natives, likening the colonists to male Indians torturing the Crown’s loyal subjects.

“A VAST, TREMENDOUS, UNFORMED SPECTRE”

The French Revolution toppled France’s existing monarchy and placed political power in the hands of “the people.” The events of 1789, which installed a French National Assembly founded on the principle of popular sovereignty and reduced the power of King Louis XVI, were apprehended throughout Europe as a threat to absolutism. But it was the coming of the Reign of Terror in 1793, signaled by the guillotining of Louis and his wife Marie Antoinette and of thousands of suspected “counter revolutionaries,” that caused the ruling classes of Europe to quake. The Terror was led by Maximilien Robespierre, whose Jacobin political club became the symbol of mob rule for those European monarchs who

6. Pauline Maier, “John Wilkes and American Disillusionment with Britain,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 20 (1963), 375. Maier’s source for letters between the American colonists and Wilkes is Worthington C. Ford, ed., “John Wilkes and Boston,” *Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings*, XLVIII (Boston, 1914), 190–215.

FIGURE 4:
Anonymous
*The Savages let loose, Or
The Cruel Fate of the Loyalists*, 1783
etching
Gift of Miss Susan Dwight Bliss
1963.295



Is this a Peace, when Loyalists must bleed?

**The SAVAGES let loose, OR
The Cruel FATE of the LOYALISTS.**

It is a Bloody Piece of work indeed.

sought to clamp down on dissent within their own borders. Whig politician Edmund Burke, formerly a supporter of the American colonists, rallied Parliament against the Jacobin scourge, that, if left unchecked, would spell doom for the ruling class: "...out of the tomb of the murdered monarchy in France has arisen a vast, tremendous, unformed spectre, in a far more terrific guise than any which ever yet have overpowered the imagination, and subdued the fortitude of man."⁷

Despite government efforts to portray English radicalism as a French invasion, movements that aimed at the sweeping transformation of English society had existed from at least as far back as the mid-seventeenth century. E. P. Thompson's study of the faith of the poet and artist William Blake shows that radicalism had an underground life in dissenting sects that wove a millenarian promise of societal "leveling" into their reading of the fall of man.⁸ In the 1790s, this radical impulse led Blake and others to support the French Revolution, believing it to be a spiritual renewal. Such supporters, regardless of their location, were branded as Jacobins and politically persecuted.

Perhaps the most notorious of the "English Jacobins" were John Thelwall and Thomas Paine. Printer Daniel Eaton was tried twice, once for publishing one of Thelwall's debate society speeches. The speech included a story in which "Farmer Thelwall" cut off the head of a gangly rooster named Chanticleer. The rooster referenced Geoffrey Chaucer's king in "The Nun's Priest's Tale," but more importantly, poked fun at George, "The Farmer King." This story lampooned George's domesticity while also invoking images of the recently beheaded Louis. Later, Eaton would be imprisoned and pilloried for publishing the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason*.⁹

Anti-Jacobinism went well beyond government repression. According to historian James Epstein, the English radicals endured a "barrage of loyalist propaganda in the form of sermons, festivals, cheap tracts, addresses, token coinage, songs, and prints." Royalist innkeepers in Manchester and Birmingham barred Jacobins from their establishments and would sometimes post signs reading "NO JACOBINS WANTED HERE." To be known as a Jacobin could get one pumped with water.¹⁰

British printmakers fueled such anti-Jacobin sentiment in part by seizing upon and further sensationalizing the events of the Terror. Among these was the assassination of Jacobin Jean-Paul Marat, a journalist who had published the newspaper, *L'Ami du Peuple* (*The Friend of the People*), in which he exposed counterrevolutionaries. To gain access to Marat, a royalist named Charlotte Corday posed as an informant with new names for him. By her own account, once inside Marat's residence, Corday stabbed him as he soaked in his bath. James Gillray's engraving, *The heroic Charlotte la Cordé, upon her Trial at the bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, July 17th 1793*, created only days after Corday's trial, clearly positioned itself as documentary in nature even as it lionized Corday. She is depicted as a rosy young woman whose "noble enthusiasm" emboldened her to "rid the world" of Marat.

7. Edmund Burke, "Letter I: On the Overtures of Peace: Addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament" (1796).

8. Edward Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

9. James Epstein, *In Practice: Studies in the Language and Culture of Popular Politics in Modern Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 100–105.

10. James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 150–151.

Another depiction of these events executed by London-based engraver Niccolò Schiavonetti (FIG. 5, page 13) took considerable artistic liberties with the much-publicized details of Marat's murder, depicting the crime more as a decorous parlor struggle. In suggesting the defilement of this most public of domestic spaces, the one in which both social and business affairs might be conducted, and by portraying Marat as no longer vulnerable to ambush in his bathtub, Schiavonetti echoed Burke's admonition that danger now approached in a civilized "guise."

Only after nearly two decades of political repression, severe censorship, and a prolonged anti-Jacobin War would the liberty cap resurface as a radical symbol. In northern British cities where plebeian radicalism flourished after 1815, and where the government response would be violent, the cap was a frequent feature. Plebeian crowds paraded the cap alongside other revolutionary icons and banners emblazoned with Paine's phrase, "The Rights of Man." In trials of radical leaders, the prosecution pointed to the presence of the liberty cap at such gatherings as proof of revolutionary intent.¹¹

"...A CARICATURE RUDELY SKETCHED"

(From Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792)

In the published advertisements for his suite of prints *Marriage à la Mode*, artist William Hogarth (1697-1764) reassured Georgian audiences that "none of the Characters represented shall be personal."¹² While it is certainly true that Hogarth's satirical prints of the 1750s and 1760s delivered whole social tableaux shot through with critique, it is not the case that these works were always devoid of personal characterizations.

On the contrary, Hogarth was chief among those eighteenth-century printmakers whose picaresque works offered not only offered social correctives, but also performed decisive political interventions. Hogarth's 1762 engraving *The Times* was one of few such works to laud the efforts of King George III and his Prime Minister, Lord Bute, to end the Seven Years' War. It should be noted that he produced this print while employed as Serjeant Painter to the King. Shown as a fireman dousing the flames engulfing a village, Bute (or possibly George III) is in turn being hosed down by a host of political adversaries, John Wilkes among them. Wilkes's views, both of the king and of Hogarth, were also widely circulated through *The North Briton*.

Hogarth seems to have blunted his satirical rapier to levels acceptable for the fine arts through his ongoing commitment to pictorial illusionism. Throughout his compositions, Hogarth signaled a relationship to conventions of high art and history painting, as much as he struck a balance between the local and the universal, and this differentiated his work from that of many later caricaturists.

"Caricature" derives from the Italian *caricare*, meaning "to load," and this etymology certainly captures the tendency to charge a representation with meaning through

11. James Epstein, "Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 122 (1989), 75-118. See especially 78-88.

12. Quoted in Robert S. Cowley, *Marriage à la Mode: A Re-view of Hogarth's Narrative Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 7.



FIGURE 5:
Nicholas (Niccolò) Schiavonetti,
English, 1771–1813
*The Death of John Paul Marat/
Mort de Jean Paul Marat*, 1794
stipple engraving
Gift of Dyer Library, Saco, Maine
2004.19.3

13. For the first historical treatment of caricature to stress this point see Karl Rosenkranz, *Aesthetik des Hässlichen*, 1853. This is an important source for Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007).

14. Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 2.

pictorial exaggeration of a particular feature or infusion of critique. But caricature must address the totality of form as rigorously as any other artistic modality, and not just rely on an aesthetics of deformation, in order to succeed.¹³

The grotesques of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), as well as other examples of Italian and Flemish portraiture, indeed served as touchstones for caricature artists of this period. Da Vinci's studies were popularized in a 1645 series of reproductive engravings; the seventeenth-century plates and catalogues of these reproductions were kept at London printing houses and continued to change hands well into the eighteenth century.¹⁴ At the same time that caricature artists had access to such visual sources, they also inhabited a foundational moment within the discipline of art history. With Swiss artist Henri Fuseli's 1765 translation of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Reflection on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, analysis of an artwork was expanded to include not only its narrative content, but also its intrinsic stylistic qualities as manifest in the relationship between surface and depth.

If Hogarth and others looked to Leonardo's typologies for inspiration, other caricaturists also borrowed from an altogether different tradition in order to structure their prints. Emblematic images, often collected in emblem books, consisted of pictorial symbols accompanied by text, and traditionally comprised an image (*pictura*), a motto or title (*inscriptio*), and a moralizing legend beneath the image (*subscriptio*). Just as the Arma Christi had become a graphic symbol of the Passion of Christ in demotic prints, these emblematic representations made use of a popular and primitivizing shorthand. Beyond being stylistically subversive, this emblematic or "hieroglyphic" mode served to protect artist and publisher from prosecution.

"THE HUNGRY MOB OF SCRIBLERS AND ETCHERS"

(Title of an etching published in 1762)

Based upon the numbers of surviving prints from this period and the extant details about their commerce, it is clear that this was a flourishing industry patronized by members of a broad socioeconomic spectrum. The period from the 1760s on saw a steady growth in the popularity of satirical prints and the displacement of their center of production from the City of London to specialist shops in the West End. Husband and wife print publishers Mary and Mathias Darly and brother and sister William and Hannah Humphrey, for example, dominated the market and also attested to the involvement of women in print production.

Less is generally known about the artists who produced these satirical prints than about the publishers. This is due in part to a dearth of written commentary by contemporaries, a symptom, perhaps, of writers' reticence to commit to the prints' political positions on the written page or to reckon with the prints' status. Some of the works on view in this

exhibition are signed by the preeminent caricaturists of the day—Thomas Colley and James Gillray, for example. And yet Gillray, perhaps the most renowned of caricaturists, received extensive press attention during his lifetime only in the German journal *London und Paris*.¹⁵ Trained at the Royal Academy before working as an historical engraver, Gillray eventually devoted all of his energies to political caricature. It was *London und Paris* that knighted Gillray a “second Hogarth,” securing his reputation into the nineteenth century.

Other artists represented in this exhibition remained anonymous or were identified incompletely, as for example, “J. Phillips,” yielding little information for biographical research. Caricaturists like George Townsend sometimes even published under a pseudonym like “Leonardo da Vinci.” At times, artists’ pseudonyms were even keyed to the critique of the print. Gillray attributed one of his prints on the topic of fiscal mismanagement to “Sejanus” and “Helagabalis” [*sic*]. The former name referenced a tyrannical Roman military figure cum politician, and the latter was a misspelled allusion to Helio-gabalus, a reputedly dissolute Roman emperor. While these efforts at discretion may have provided some reassurance for their makers, Georgian England did not suffer the extent of censorship and litigiousness endured by the French press. Wealthy individuals who were targeted in a print could just as soon buy up all the copies and distribute them among their intimates.¹⁶

As many scholars have demonstrated, it was the investment of members of the upper classes in the sponsorship and consumption of such satirical prints that fueled their production.¹⁷ Interested buyers could purchase the works directly from publishing houses or else could order them by mail. As far as we can tell, such prints would most likely have been collected in folios or bound albums housed in libraries rather than framed for display. Their ownership was more of a private signifying practice for audiences of peers than a public one. Just as the landed gentry and financial aristocracy steered the political nation, funded the trans-Atlantic wars, and helped to drive the slave trade, they underwrote and sustained a particular vision of the world in these prints. Fittingly, it is due to their conspicuous consumption that these works survive.

15. For the most exhaustive discussion of Gillray’s coverage in *London und Paris* see Christiane Banerji and Diana Donald, *Gillray Observed: The Earliest Account of his Caricatures in London und Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

16. Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, 15.

17. See, for example, *The Age of Caricature*, and Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.) Amelia Rauser demonstrates how much these prints trafficked in symbols for an emergent capitalist liberalism on both sides of the Atlantic. See Amelia Rauser, “Death or Liberty: British Political Prints and the Struggle for Symbols in the American Revolution,” *Oxford Art Journal* Vol. 21, No. 2 (1998), 153-171.



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